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29 February 1984

Talking Points on Current CBW Issues

- Public and Intelligence Community attention continues to focus primarily on the issue of chemical/toxin use in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan.
- the recent State Department submission to the UN is based upon the intelligence assessment that there has been greatly diminished use in 1983 in Southeast Asia and no confirmed evidence of use in 1983 in Afghanistan.
- The recent fast-track SNIE identified a program in the Soviet Union to use advanced biotechnologies, including genetic engineering, for the development of novel BCW agents.
- The program is large and well-funded.
- This means that the Soviets can develop a much broader range of BCW agents, and can do so under conditions that will make detection of production and use nearly impossible.

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- Iraq has reportedly used mustard again this week against Iran with multiple deaths. They are proceeding actively with the construction of a nerve agent production facility and could have nerve agent available for use in six months.
- A spate of negative public articles on "yellow rain" continues to erode confidence in the State Department case for Soviet use. Other articles such as the February 15 Wall Street Journal rebuttal to a Chemical and Engineering News article have somewhat blunted the effect.
- The informed members of the scientific community are strongly supportive in private of the US position.
- Negative press on "yellow rain" will continue but may become defused by public evidence (marshalled by the Iranians) of the reality of lethal chemical weapon use by Iraq.
- In reponse to Secretary Weinberger's request for a contact person to provide intelligence support to the legislative funding request for US CW work in FY 1985, [ ] has been recommended.

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